

Building a Culture of Encouragement:

*Creating a School of
Volunteer Learners*

2009 Idaho Summer Institute
of Best Practices



Building a Culture of Encouragement

What does it take?

1. Recognition of the Need
2. “What’s in it for me?”
3. Commitment of the entire staff
4. A “Coordinated Plan of Attack”
5. Assessing our Progress: Asking the Kids
6. Recommitment and moving forward with new targets



Some realizations about a Culture of Encouragement.....

- Who are we teaching these days? (how well do we know our students?)
- The school climate (invitational or not?)
- The relationship between the adults in the school building: what does yours look like?
- Inviting students to learn: who's responsibility?
- Value Added Grading ?(a carrot or the hammer)



Why is it so difficult to create a positive school climate?

- Is it the principal?
- Is it the teachers?
- Is it the students?
- How about the parents?
- Maybe it's the school board? or the community?



Maybe, it is everyone's
responsibility??



Let's look at the facts.....

- If you always do what you've done, you always get what you got.
- Our rate of change, are we managing it or is it managing us? or are we changing “kicking and screaming” as we go?



Who are we teaching these days?

- Are today's students different than those we taught just a decade ago?? _____
- What motivates them to try harder, to be more successful, to see value and relativity in their schooling?

Let's look at Millennials and Generation Xers.....



Millennials

- Born approximately from 1983 until 2002
- Multi-Taskers and Techno-savvy
- **Characteristics of Millennials:** Hopeful, Determined at work, View leadership as a collective effort, Inclusive, No majority race, Want feedback at the touch of a button, Need flexibility to balance activities
- Very different from the Gen Xers



Characteristics of the Generation X and Millennial “Blend”

- No expectation of lifetime employment (this is the first generation to do this)
- 9.2 jobs by the age of 30
- They cannot recall a time before cell phones and are truly “tech dependant”
- The 13 to 24 age group spent more time last year on one of their “interests” than watching TV
- Lived through the most monumental financial boom in history and the 2008/9 recession/depression



Generation X

- Survey of College Graduates (P-16) reports that 64% of college graduates actually plan to move back home before getting a full time job; 38% of those graduates plan to live there over 7 months
- They want “instant gratification with personalization”
- They believe strongly in the idea of entitlement (“you owe us just for showing up”)



Generation X

- They want things on their terms and aren't going to be talked out of accepting anything less
- They have grown up with more “width” than any previous generation
- There is no longer an accepted definition of “uniform school culture” in America



Generation X

- They will be the first generation to face full scale globalization: outsourcing of almost every major and minor industrial and commercial enterprise/labor force in America today

So, what difference does this make? It is about the culture you have created in your classroom and school.....



The “Real” Definition of School Culture

1. What’s “normal” at your school?
2. “It’s the way things are done around here”
3. It ‘s the way decisions are made when leadership is not present (secretaries and principals)
4. Unwritten codes that are reinforced because it is the right thing to do or.....?



Some ideas

- Number One, ask the students.....
- Give students **ownership** of the school...how can you do it??
- “Brownie Points” for teachers
- Photographs of teachers “caught teaching”
- Teacher/Student as “Principal for the Day”
- How often do you do something “just for fun” Why not?



Would any of these ideas really
make any difference in the
culture of your school?

Let's look in another direction....



“If you don’t feed the
teachers they will eat the
students”



“ The nature of the relationships among the adults who inhabit the school has more to do with the accomplishments of its pupils than any other factor”

Roland Barth



How important is teacher
collegiality ?

Does it really impact student
performance?



Teacher Relationships

- **Parallel Play** (independent contractors that share the same parking lot)
- **Adversarial Relationships** (withholding information from peers; lack of professionalism)
- **Congenial Relationships** (most teachers are friendly and these schools are good places to work)

Teacher Relationships

- **Collegial Relationships** (teachers are “critical friends,” they spend time in each other’s classroom, looking at student work, teaching decisions are made with the consent and advice of peers)



Teacher Collegiality (Barth)

1. Teachers talk with each other about the work that they do
2. Sharing “craft” knowledge, shouting it from the mountain top; and honoring it when someone else is sharing it
3. Making your practice mutually visible; we watch each other and talk about what we saw with the intention of learning from each other



Teacher Collegiality

4. Rooting for the success of one another; when one teacher/student is successful, **all celebrate** even if we don't know the student

Teacher collegiality is dependant more on the level of principal leadership than any other factor!!



Encouragement to Learn

As teachers and administrators, what can we do to make the students want to learn?

Learning is not the business of schools.

Learning in schools, like profit in business, is what happens when schools (and teachers) do their business right.

The business of schools (and teachers) is to design, create, and invent high-quality, intellectually demanding work for students.

Phil Schlechty



Where are your students?

1. Ritual Engagement: “Is this going to be graded? What do I have to do to get an A?”
2. Passive Compliance: “Just tell me what I have to do to get outta here”
3. Retreatism: “Do Authentic Engagement: “Do we have to stop now”
4. we have to do this again?”
5. Rebellion: “This is stupid, I didn’t learn anything” “There’s no way I’m doing that again”



You can lead a horse to
water but you can't make
him drink?"

Madeline Hunter



“So, you better remember to salt
his oats”



Excitement and Enthusiasm

One major component of current educational research tells us that the “**passion**” for **teaching** as perceived by the student is a major factor in the student’s rate of retention and willingness to continue to learn.

How passionate are you about your job?

Does it “show”?



Classroom Instruction that Works

- Identifying similarities and differences (analogies)
- Summarizing and note-taking
- Cooperative learning
- Questions/Cues/Advanced Organizers
- Homework and Practice
- Non-linguistic representations (graphic organizers)
- Reinforcing effort and providing recognition
- Generating and testing hypotheses
- Setting goals/objectives and providing feedback

Marzano <http://www.marzanoandassociates.com/>



Increasing Student Achievement

- These strategies are designed to be used at different times, in different contexts, and to address different learning objectives
- Although the McREL research attributed 13% of the variance in student achievement to the teacher, in addition to **instruction**, the two other major teacher characteristics that impact student achievement are **classroom management** and **curriculum design**.



Daily Lesson Sequence Template

- Get started
- Engage
- Explore
- Explain
- Practice together
- Practice in teams/groups/pairs
- Practice alone
- Evaluate
- Close



Warm Up: Organizer/Get Started- before teaching begins

- An activity students immediately begin doing when they enter the classroom-does not require explanation or teacher direction.
- Example: “Admit slip”
- 3 minutes



Engage

- Works to get the attention and builds interest in the subject.
- Example: photograph, art work, tap into student's learning styles
- 5 minutes





Feldman's 4 Stages of Looking: Reading a Work of Art

1. Describe
2. Analyze
3. Interpret
4. Judge



Explore

- Provides experience with the content and builds a knowledge base.
- Example: analyzing a photograph or data, primary source document, pre-reading strategies, brainstorm in pairs or quads, lab activities, and build a model
- 15 minutes



Explain

- Explanation (teacher tells) about content with students actively engaged.
- Example: lecture with research-based interactive note-taking strategy, student presentations, interactive discussion
- 15 minutes



Practice Together (Guided Practice)

- Guided practice that allows students to work and respond in whole group. Do it together and **coach them as you go**.
- Example: Examining Essential Questions, discussions, make predictions from presented evidence, collaborative writing, construct timelines/graphs
- 10 minutes



Framer Model (a strategy for development)

Definition (in own words)	Characteristics
Examples	Non-examples

Practice in Teams/buddy-pairs

- Students work in smaller groups and collaboratively process information and complete assignments.
- Example: Jigsaw activity on assessments, Pairs Check worksheet, Team Mind Mapping activity, answer questions, peer review or edit, research information
- 10 minutes



Practice Alone

Students process information and complete similar assignment individually with teacher monitoring.

Given before homework is assigned.

Understanding is critical

Example: Read and take notes while reading “Bird Flu.” Start with the sample problem on page 36, then **check off with your partner for accuracy**, the rest of the problems will be for homework.



Evaluate Understanding (daily, weekly, post-assessment)

- Teacher checks for understanding throughout the Explanation using a variety of methods.
- Teacher interacts with student/s during practice (guided practice) in teams and during practice alone, open ended questions, writing sample (quick write), individual project/presentation, quiz
- 15 minutes



Closing Activities

Teacher completes lesson by having students reflect on their learning experiences.

Example: Reflect on an Essential Question with an Exit Slip, student reflection activity, student summary of major points, homework clarification.

5 minutes



Daily Sequence Checklist: Closing Activities

- Cements students' understanding of the content?
- Maintains control (how about on-task behaviors instead of control?) until the end of class?
- Answers questions and clarifies instructions?
- Sets up next day's instruction?
- Explains the purpose and outcome for homework (practice, preparation for new learning, elaborate on new information)?
- Provides a way for **all** students to participate in closure?
- Includes a way for all students to verbalize what the learning was (whip-around, popcorn, outcome sentences, exit tickets, reflection journal, etc.)



Enrichment/Extension:

- Pushes students to go beyond proficient or advanced level mastery of the content?
- Encourages students to demonstrate higher levels of cognition: application, analysis, synthesis, etc.?
- Allows teacher to continue with other students, if necessary?
- Differentiates homework or provides student choice during homework?
- Examples: review, practice, tutoring, selected reading



Daily Sequence Checklist: Accommodations

- Addresses identified skills for students who need extra help or extra time?
- Connects to and supports standards?
- Addresses weaknesses identified on pre- and daily assessments?
- Fits needs for multiple levels of extra-help?
- Allows teacher to continue with other students, if necessary?
- Fits fairly into the grading system?



Differentiation

Differentiation is a process through which teachers enhance learning by matching student characteristics to instruction and assessment. Differentiation allows all students to access the same classroom curriculum by providing entry points, learning tasks, and outcomes that are tailored to students' needs. In a differentiated classroom, variance occurs in the way in which students gain access to the content being taught (Hall, Strangman, & Meyer, 2003).



Grading: A Culture of Encouragement?

What do grades really mean?

“Grades are often perceived as the measure of ability-in fact, grades become definitions of who people are” (Strickland and Strickland, 2000)

“Grades have become one of the most sacred traditions in American education-they have acquired a almost cult-like importance in American schools; they are the primary tools for communicating to parents how their children are doing” (Olsen, 1995)



If grades and grading are so important.....

- Why is the variation so great between teacher given grades and standardized or state testing? From one teacher to the next? From one department to the next? From one school to the next?
- Shouldn't there be an “expected consistency” in how students are graded in a school?



Value Added Grading: the Critical Attributes

- It is authentic assessment
- It is an assignment that is on standard and fully assessed
- It includes ongoing feedback
- It requires coaching throughout the process
- It requires the opportunity to redo the assignment (possibly with conditions being met)



Grades and Grading:

What are the Essential Questions?

- What are grades? Their purpose?
- Have we chosen to use grades to measure student learning?
- Courts have determined that grades are a property right of the “owner”?; Who is the “owner”??
- Can harm be done with a grade?
- Are you, the teacher, grading ALL your students the same way? Should you?



- Do my grading practices promote students working harder?; Should they?
- What's the difference between an A or B and C, D, or F? What's the difference between formative and summative grading? Which type do you use more frequently?
- Is it possible that students grades are, in a sense, “predetermined”? If so, how?



- Do you average grades to determine a student's "final" grade? Should you?
- Do you believe in the "normal curve" ? If not, would it be acceptable that if all students in one of your classes mastered **ALL** course competences at high levels, **ALL** students could/would receive A's?



If the only tool you have is a
hammer, you tend to see every
problem as a nail”

Abraham Maslow



The threat of a low grade?

- Who does it impact and how ?
 - Who does it fail to impact?



What does failure teach students?

When a student fails your course, **what is your (and your school's) response ?**



Some grading strategies to consider.....

- “Basement” grading policies
- Common Course Syllabi (providing information to all interested parties on how grades are to be determined)
- Create “Second Chances” or “re do” policy
- Credit Recovery
- Make Up School



Value Added Grading Principles

- Start with zero and build (the United Way method)
- Power of I
- Median grading not averaging
- Spend your energy on behaviors that you want rather than those you don't
- Focus on what's right
- Full Disclosure



- Keep the light on at the end of the tunnel or bread-cruming
- “Systemic” nagging involving parents
- Develop a value added grading philosophy that is endorsed by the entire faculty
- Ensure that the policy is fully disclosed to all stakeholders and that realistically communicates progress to students and parents
- Grades should NOT be based on student behavior, but on student learning (if you want to give a grade for behavior, attitude, give a separate grade)



- Avoid grade inflation
- Create a relationship between grades in your school and state or nationally normed testing
- Embellish your grades with information that describes what the student needs to learn to reach proficiency Talk with your colleagues about what an A or a B looks like; should it be a similar (in quality) product or performance in all classes that are teaching the same standard?
- Create an Action Plan to move your school forward to reshaping grades and grading practices as tools for motivation, more student effort, and encouragement



Finally, try this.....

Test #	# Items	# Correct	% Correct	Grade
1	100	87	87	B
2	50	45	90	B
3	5	2	40	F
4	Essay	75%	75	D
5	5	1	20	F
6	50	45	90	B
7	Essay	75%	75	D

How would you determine Juan's grade?

- Given this data, how would you go about determining Juan's letter grade for the period?
- What letter grade would you assign?

Do this alone, then compare with your colleague.....



What do students want?

After establishing “listening posts” in schools all over the state of Delaware, the State Superintendent released her findings collected from every middle and high school in Delaware. She then summarized the findings into 6 broad, but unmistakable categories for us.....



What do students want?

1. They want to know that **their teachers know and care for them as individuals.** They want this message to be played out in the actions of their teachers regularly. **They want teachers to help them be successful** (which doesn't necessarily mean good grades)



What do students want?

2. They want teachers who are knowledgeable about the subject that they teach. They want to be sure that the teachers knows what he/she is talking about. They want teachers who teach with passion and enthusiasm.



What do students want?

3. They want to be challenged with interesting, rigorous and relevant work; they want to be held accountable for doing quality work and they want to be (this one is tricky) recognized for doing good work. They want to have a choice (or voice) in the assignments and assessments they are given.



What do students want?

4. They want the opportunity to work with others regularly. They want novelty and variety in the assignments they are given. They want a classroom setting that changes to allow them to explore, experiment, and investigate.



What do students want?

5. **They want to be treated fairly.** They want ALL students to be treated fairly; no favorites of teachers or administrators. They want equity of opportunity to take any courses that their schools offers; not to be shut out because of circumstances in the past.



What would happen in your school if you really tried to built your school improvement plans on what students really want from their teachers and principals?



Let's look at a couple of diagnostic tools that can be used.....

- “Assessing Our School Culture” Survey
- Teaching Styles Inventory
- Student Engagement Surveys
- Focus Groups with principal and students;
with teachers and students (not their own);
with principal and/or teachers and parents



How about a plan to change the way
you look at grades and grading in your
classroom and **across the entire
school??**

Have you ever considered thinking
about “**value added grading**” instead of
simply using grading as a finite
measure of what a student may know at
a particular point in time?



What did we leave out?

- Instructional Strategies that engage the learner: “he who does the talking in the classroom is the one who does the learning” Harry Wong
- Differentiation: remediation and enrichment
- The “fun” factor
- Affiliation
- Product Focus
- Student Choice and Voice in their learning



Don't excuse yourself from the
responsibility of making school a
place where ALL students are
encouraged to try harder every day!



Take the first step.....

Is it possible to make school a place that we **all** (students, teachers, staff) enjoy and can find the personal satisfaction of success.

Some of you will remember Charles Swindoll's admonition to us.....



The longer I live, the more I realize the importance of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than education, than money, than circumstances, than failure, than success, than what other people think or say or do.



The remarkable thing is that we have a choice each and every day regarding the attitude we choose to embrace for that day.



We cannot change our past...we cannot change the fact that people act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have and that is our attitude.



Good Luck!

It is great to be back in Idaho!!

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